

Garden Club Horticultural Hints February 2019

Put Your Heart into Winter Gardening!

Winter Vortex means you wear Gore-Tex. Late January's extreme weather was the North Pole making a visit to your garden (minus the sleigh and reindeer). You won't know what it means for your garden until spring. If you have plants that aren't listed as hardy for your zone, you may have damage or even lose some. The most widespread problem will probably be damage to spring flower buds that weren't ready for the extreme chill. In the future you can consider protecting the buds by wrapping the plant in row cover and then adding a waterproof cover—like a tarp tied over. Of course, if we have an unusually warm winter, make certain you unwrap it so the buds aren't scorched.



The weather has been frightful, but that doesn't mean you don't have chores this month. First, have you ordered the seeds you want for your flower or vegetable garden? Wait too long and you'll find your first choices may be sold out. And if you are someone who starts seeds indoors, make certain you have the supplies you need now. While you are looking at the catalogs, make notes on new varieties or plants you want to try this year. Why? Sometimes we forget everything we planned when faced with a plethora of choices when you walk into a nursery brimming with seedlings.

As you peruse catalogues looking at seeds, keep in mind things like 'days to maturity'. New England doesn't have a 100 day growing season!

Valentine's Day is a perfect time to give a friend (special friend?) a house plant. Cyclamens, orchids and cacti make great Valentine's Day gifts that outlast cut flowers and are not demanding of a great deal of care. Nursery gift certificates may be an even better choice for a dedicated outdoor gardener.



Summer tours. Start Googling garden tours — especially the local ones. Yes, you can take tours of exotic and famous gardens around the world, but start closer to home. There are great ideas you could borrow from local garden club garden tours (and it's easier than trying to re-create Versailles in your back yard). Homeowners love to talk about their gardens and you may also get leads on where to find a plant you covet or the name of a reliable landscaper. You may also see that not every dream works out the way it was envisioned and that's a great help too.

The internet is a wonderful place to start looking for local garden tours. You may also want to look at the 'calendar' section of the websites of garden club federations around New England.

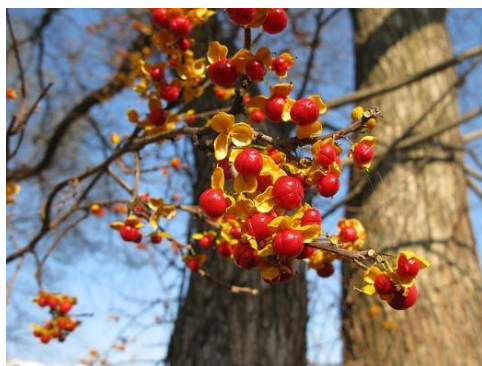
Six Garden Tours in New England to Check Out This Summer



When it warms up and before the snow gets too deep, prune for shape, to control growth and to remove any storm-damaged limbs. You can prune grapes, most fruit trees and evergreens. Because you would be removing flower buds, don't prune trees or shrubs that bloom in the spring unless you are doing so to remove damaged limbs.



Show your houseplants a little love with a leaf wash, either by hand with a soft cloth or in the sink or shower after covering the exposed soil with an old plastic bag. Clean leaves are more efficient at taking in sunshine---and they look nicer too. At the end of the month start fertilizing house plants again. Regular, but very weak solutions are better for plants than occasional heavy fertilizations



Doing more good with your saw and pruners. Now is a great time to cut down vines that are growing on trees. Even decorative vines can grow too large for the good of a tree or too heavy for a trellis to support. And if you have any invasives such as oriental bittersweet, Japanese honeysuckle or mile-a-minute vine near you, cut them down and bag them for the trash; never compost these major horticultural felons. For more information, Google 'MA Invasive Plant list' which includes common and scientific names. Click on the plant name to see a photo of the felon.